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The Evolution of Within- and Cross-Country Differences in the Transition to Adulthood: A New Perspective
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The Evolution of Within- and Cross-Country Differences in the Transition to Adulthood: A New Perspective

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Abstract

Theories as well as empirical studies of demographic change have stressed the emergence of a new pattern of transition to adulthood. Using a newly constructed data set that combines large cross-national samples from the Gender and Generations Survey as well as from the European Social Survey we analyse the development of four key transitions, the leaving of the parental home, the first time cohabiting in a couple, the first marriage and the arrival of the first child and document their development over time. We start from a set of hypotheses aimed at contrasting the idea of an emerging new typical pathway, characterized by late and protracted transitions, to the idea of an ever-increasing diversity of patterns within and between countries. Particular attention is paid to the question of convergence in transition patterns by proposing a set of new methods for more precisely assessing whether it can be observed and by linking patterns of individual change within countries to those happening between countries. While the direction into which individual and cross-country divergence is happening has clear trends to it. We conclude that the idea of convergence towards a new ideal pathway to adulthood has to be discarded. Instead the emergence of a greater set of possibilities in how to transit towards adulthood tends to consistently augment individual within-country as well as cross-country differences in lifecourse patterns. Particular attention is paid to how demographic changes play out differently by gender and institutional regimes.

1 Changes in the transition to adulthood

1.1 A diversification of pathways to adulthood

The start of the conceptualization of the life-course as a sequence of events that can be measured and quantified, which happened in the 1970s (Elder, 1975) (Modell et al., 1976), fell together with a time-period in which the timing as well as the sequencing of key life-course events began to profoundly change. Studies of young adults' lifecourses have been a flourishing field of investigation ever since. While many of the foundational lifecourse

studies where done on US data, rapidly the focus expanded to include many other countries (Cavalli et al., 1993) (Kerckhoff, 1990) (Billari, 1998) as well as a comparative perspective(Blossfeld et al., 2005) (Breen, 2002) (Gauthier, 2007) (Billari and Liefbroer, 2010).

Following a secular trend of standardization, patterns of transition to adulthood have changed substantially in most western countries from the late 1960s onwards (Modell et al., 1976) (Sironi, 2008) . Typically, the demographic events of the transition to adulthood include such markers as leaving home, finishing education, securing a job, marrying or cohabiting, and having children. In the post-war years, the transition occurred quickly (usually by age 25 for both men and women) and in an orderly sequence beginning with school completion, full-time work, and home-leaving. Since the late 1970s, the transition has lengthened and become more circuitous and complex (Aassve et al., 2002) (Breen, 2002) (Sironi and Furstenberg, 2012); (Furstenberg Jr., 2010); (Furstenberg, 2013)

Traditional markers of the transition to adulthood, like leaving home, marriage and parenthood, no longer have the same significance they once had. One reason is that the frequency and timing of these events has changed dramatically in most European and other Western countries: most of them occur much later than a few decades ago; and the transitions between different states take longer nowadays. Life-style changes during the early stage of adulthood partly explain this trend towards later, more protracted transitions, with the extension of a period of semi-autonomy. This period is characterized by young people living on their own despite not necessarily having completed their education or secured their position in the labor market nor having entered into an official partnership union. In most cases young people in this situation benefit from support from their family and in some cases from the state, which underlines that this situation has become an increasingly accepted stage of the transition to adulthood.

The "de-standardization" of pathways occurring during the early years of adulthood, which is clearly illustrated by the growing variety of possible sequences of life events that we observe among younger generations, is another important aspect of the many changes affecting the transition to adulthood. With the exception of education, which is still completed before entry into the labour market in most cases, the order of transitions has become increasingly destandardized. Marriage no longer necessarily precedes childbirth, nor is it a necessary condition for young men and women to leave parental home and to establish themselves in a separate home. In Europe, completion of education and getting a first job have been postponed everywhere, but they still occur before the first union and the first child in most cases, especially for men (Billari and Liefbroer, 2010) (Toulemon, 2010). Some countries, in particular those in which labour market entry for youths has become more difficult, have seen a decline in the proportion of young adults who leave the parental home before having a full-time job, making the transition towards self-sufficiency a longer process, which often comprises several episodes of unemployment and family support. Pathways to adulthood have therefore become increasingly complex among the youngest generations, and their diversity has increased in all countries (Lesnard et al., 2010) (Toulemon, 2010) and (Furstenberg Jr., 2010). Summing up these different developments Billari and Liefbroer (Billari and Liefbroer, 2010) accurately described the changes in transitions to adulthood that have marked industrialized nations over the last decades as moving from a

pattern that is "early, contracted and simple" to one that is "late, protracted and complex" .

Men and women are affected differently by these changes, as can be seen by the fact that gender differences in different markers of the transition to adulthood have not been stable over time. Whereas in Southern Europe gender differences appear to be declining, they are on the rise in most other European countries and markedly so in Eastern Europe (Toulemon, 2010). We know about some possible reasons for these differentials. For example, for men, steady employment and earnings are positively associated with marriage and childbearing (Becker, 1991) (Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001) (Blossfeld et al., 2005) (Gibson-Davis, 2005) (Gibson-Davis, 2009). For women, the picture is less clear and appears to depend on local and national context, birth cohort, labour market conditions as well as the educational attainment and social status of the family of origin (Blossfeld, 2003) (Harknett and Kuperberg, 2011) (Kreyenfeld et al., 2012)). Harknett and Kuperberg (Harknett and Kuperberg, 2011)suggest that in the US better labour markets conditions at the local level are positively associated with marriage only for women with a high school degree or less, while the highly educated seem to value their individual "independence" more, even under more favorable material conditions. Besides the economic context, countries' historical and institutional contexts also seem to matter, since lower transitions to marriage (and higher cohabitation rates) are found in countries where the transition into the service society took place earlier, where the emphasis on social and gender equality is high, and where the segmentation of the school system is low (Blossfeld, 2003) (Hamplova, 2009).

Pathways to adulthood are also marked by and changing differently, according to socioeconomic backgrounds both at the individual level and at the cross-country institutional level. At the individual level, persons who postpone family formation tend to have the highest levels of education. A long period of educational enrollment is associated with late entry into partnership and parenthood. Late departure from the parental home often concerns poorly qualified young adults, whose position in the labour market is quite insecure (Blossfeld et al., 2005) (Robette, 2010). When looking at the institutional or cross-country level, there is little evidence of a convergence between countries with regard to the timing or sequencing of events. There are, for example, clear differences with regards to the median age at union formation, marriage and entry into parenthood, and entering a first job. Postponement of marriage and motherhood usually began the earliest in Northern Europe, followed by Western and Southern Europe (Billari and Wilson, 2001) (Van de Velde, 2009) (Billari and Liefbroer, 2010) (Lesnard et al., 2010) (Toulemon, 2010) . In Eastern Europe, postponement usually appears only for the youngest cohorts. Overall, pathways to adulthood have become much more complex and protracted among youngest cohorts in all Western countries, but the question reamins whether individuals within countries as well as between countries are moving towards these diversified pathways in similar ways and moving towards a new model of transition to adulthood or whether we can see individuals and countries growing more different from each other as these changes diffuse. In other words we are interested to know whether behaviours marking the transition to adulthood are converging or diverging.

1.2 Convergence or path-dependent evolutions?

Various developments have had major implications for the evolution of the transition to adulthood. Some of these developments occurred in most western countries, some only in some countries. Also, some factors may have homogenizing effects on individuals accross and within countries, making pathways to adulthood more similar, others might maintain or potentially exacerbate cross-country differences. In the following we will discuss factors we know to have influenced changes in young adults life courses. These are educational, macro-economic and demographic changes, globalization, meaning both the diffusion of economic integration as well as of culture and norms, changes in values and norms over-time, and the availability of new technology, in particular with regards to making household tasks less time-intensive and enabling wider contraception.

First and foremost, the expansion of education, characterized by an increasing number of girls and boys entering into post-secondary education and a prolongation of studies, has profoundly changed the timing and form of the transition from school to work. The growth of knowledge and the appearance of the skills economy has put a high premium on tertiary education. Young people entering into the labour market with lower diplomas are increasingly likely to hold jobs with lower pay and of lower quality. Furthermore, structural "dualism" of educational systems in some countries, as well as high rates of unemployment have increasingly made finding full-time and secure employment more difficult for youths in many places. As a consequence, young people in the OECD on average spent 11.2 years in education in 2010, against having spent around 6 years in education the 1960s (Thévenon, 2012). This prolongation of the average duration of enrollment in educational systems is clearly one of the key reasons for which young people delay departure from the parental homes and/or the starting of a family. In parallel, there is a development contrasting this expansion of education, where we have an increasing share of young people who leave the educational system without having completed their diploma, and often times without good prospects of finding a job. Under these polarizing circumstances, educational background and the related career prospects have gained increased prominence in the determination of patterns of entry into adulthood.

These effects are sometimes regarded in combination with the important macro-level changes in demographic and economic prospects that also started in the early 1970s. From the 1970s until the late 1980s, most European countries experienced periods of increased economic instability and volatility. At practically the same time, the large baby boom cohorts entered the labour market, creating what has been called the Easterlin effect, i.e. that a large cohort size reduces the economic opportunities of that cohort's members and reduces income relative to the cohort of the smaller parental generations (Pampel and Peters, 1995); (Macunovich, 2011). Low relative economic status in turn led to lower fertility, higher rates of female labour force participation, later marriage, and higher divorce rates. Findings related to Easterlin's theory have been mixed, some studies providing support (Jeon and Shields, 2005); (Macunovich, 2011), others claiming that changes in relative cohort sizes are not powerful predictors of changes in labour market outcomes and social behaviours (Pampel and Peters, 1995).

Yet, the evolution of labour markets and the growing interdependencies between economies of western countries, referred to as the process of economic "globalization", have considerably changed the conditions for young people

to enter in the labour market, to secure their economic position and develop a career (Blossfeld et al., 2005). These changes have generated more uncertainties for young people for establishing themselves independently, and potentially starting a family, with large differences by socio-economic status and educational background. Changes in attitudes and values have also been noticeable drivers of the evolution of transition pathways to adulthood. A foremost change is pointed out by Giddens (Giddens, 1991) who emphasizes that individual life-planning has become a general feature in modern societies. In this context, young adults are increasingly expected to autonomously plan their future life trajectory, including their living arrangements.

This shift in attitudes echoed the movement of sexual liberalization and the diffusion of contraceptives that happened simultaneously to this movement and which made it possible for young people to more easily enter into partnerships for the main sake of satisfaction derived from living with another person. Further the diffusion of the people greatly increased the possibility, in particular for women, to have a longer educational trajectory by giving them more choice over the timing of children Goldin and Katz (2002). In addition to the technological revolution in contraceptive technology, the development and diffusion of durable household appliances (washing machines, dish washers etc.) helped free up the time of women and allow them a pathway to education that also severely impacted demographic decisions Greenwood et al. (2005) Yet, the possibilities for young people to leave the parental home early and to live on their own continue to crucially depend on individual resources as well as on those resources provided by the institutional context.

These changes in attitudes and norms regarding personal and family life are seen to be important drivers of what is often called the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) Lesthaeghe (1995), which as a consequence, predicts a new less ordered and more protracted transition to adult life. Whether individuals and countries are moving towards a new model that will eventually become a stable equilibrium remains an open question, however. On the one hand, the diffusion of new lifestyles among young people might lead us to expect that behaviours will progressively converge towards new lifestyle standards where youths leave the parental home early, then spend time without a partner before entering a non-marital union, followed (even though not necessarily) by relatively late childbirth and marriage. Proponents of the SDT also point out that the diffusion of this new norm started in Northern Europe but progressively spread out to other western countries and beyond (Lesthaeghe, 2010). As more and more individuals within a country adapt the new lifecourse patterns and as they spread to more countries, one expect to see a convergence of lifecourse paths both within and between countries to happen. There might be some limits to this convergence process though, since the diffusion of new norms will highly depend on the resources young adults can get to become independent and adopt the new lifestyle. In this context, the weight of context-specific features on the evolution of patterns over time is considerable, and sub-narratives are necessary to encompass the diversity of national situations above and over commonalities (Lesthaeghe, 2010). Overall, it is possible that individuals jointly move towards a more complex form of transitioning to adulthood that becomes incresingly standardized (individual convergence) or that they use the possibilities of structuring their lives in so

many different possible ways to chose increasingly different paths (individual divergence). Further it is possible that (even if individuals within countries chose lots of different pathways) the diffusion of norms and technology leads countries to appear increasingly similar to each other (cross-country divergence) or it is possible that (even if individuals within countries converge towards a standardized model) the increased possibilities of constructing different lifecourses interact with country-specific institutions and norms in ways that lead countries to look increasingly different (cross-country) divergence. Our work aims to empirically assess these scenarios.

Against this background, different "regimes" of youth transitions have been distinguished in comparative research stressing the complex interplay between socio-economic structures, institutional arrangements and cultural patterns (Breen, 2002) (Walther, 2006) (Buchholz et al., 2009) and providing a rationale for why cross-country, or cross-regime group differences might persist. Buchmann (Buchmann, 1989), for example sees differences in countries' institutional arrangements, which promote "individualism" to differing degrees as key to understanding cross-national differences. The notion of "regimes" relates to existing institutional settings that have a history structured by the interplay between the economy, institutions and the set of attitudes and values which legitimises behaviour and which they constantly reproduce. The regimes can thus be seen as being embedded into structures of historical "path dependency". While being dependent on historical paths it nevertheless makes sense to also regard such regimes as being subject to constant change and in the context of globalization, increased interaction with other regimes and institutional setting. Change may happen explicitly through policy reforms, or implicitly through the diffusion of new lifestyles that become progressively more accepted. Processes of change vary across regimes, however, in line with the specific institutional arrangements attached. As a result proponents of a regimes perspective, might expect that not only will the pace of change vary across regimes, but also that the convergence between countries will be limited. Three areas of institutional arrangements are of particular importance for explaining why differences between different countries might persist: 1) the nature of educational system, and in particular how it facilitates or not the transition from school to work and creates or reduces inequalities among young people making this transition; 2) the regulation of the labour market, and the extent to which young people can benefit from specific support and labour market policies to enter the labour market and to secure their employment; 3) the overall welfare regime, which in particular sets how social policies coordinate with the family and with markets to facilitate the transition to work and towards the achievement of self-sufficiency. One of the key roles of these institutions is to moderate the uncertainty that is channeled towards specific social groups (Blossfeld et al., 2005) (Esping-Andersen, 2007) . We follow a distinction of classic regimes that have been identified, that is very close to the distinction welfare regimes proposed by Esping-Andersen (Esping-Andersen, 1990). In addition to the four regimes identified in Esping-Andersen's work we include former Soviet-Bloc countries and treat these as a separate fifth regime, due to their vastly different institutional history. We thus distinguish

1. **Universalistic regime** provides a comprehensive school and training system, broad universal social benefits with a strong support to enter the labour market, and a limited reliance of youths on the family. With regard to

youths behaviours, the higher security that the universalistic model guarantees allows for earlier transitions in providing people with the necessary resources as well as with less uncertainty in planning their future. On the other hand the greater individual material freedom allows for more experimentation and longer periods between the time at which youths leave the parental home and those at which they enter into marital union. The Scandinavian countries' exemplify this regime

2. **Liberal regime** with a strong reliance on labour market flexibility for youths to achieve self-sufficiency; only those who dropped out from school and/or failed to get a job may receive social support. The Anglosaxon countries broadly fall into this regime type.

3. **Conservative or employment-centered regimes**, where both the educational system and the labour market are highly segmented and where the role of the family is still prevalent to support the young adults who are mainly conceived by State institutions as dependent on their family. Continental European countries, such as Germany, Belgium and to some degree France are often seen as representatives of this regime.

4. **Sub-protective regimes** describe a situation similar to what is found in many Mediterranean countries which are characterized by a high degree of labour market segmentation and sporadic support from the State. As a consequence, youths strongly rely on family support to face the high degree of uncertainty that the labour market segmentation and the low state support contribute to establish. In this context, youth choices heavily depend on the extent of family support and on the situation of the labour market in order to be able to achieve independence.

5. **Post-socialist regimes** depart from the former with a strong prevalence of universalistic principles in providing welfare benefits encouraging both egalitarian relationships between the sexes, generations, and a de-familiarization of welfare. However, the end of communism and the introduction of market economy have produced a shock with no comparison in other countries, setting levels of uncertainty at highest levels. Youths experienced so a switch from a system in which individual pathways were highly certain and regulated by state institutions to a transition period which was often marked by high levels of individual uncertainty. Eastern European Countries and Russia fall into this category.

1.3 Hypotheses

The literature review shows that while theoretically there have been a number of reasons in favor of a new model pathway to adulthood, the empirical literature has been relatively clear on that no convergence can be found. What do we thus have to add to these well-established findings?

The first four important additions relate to advancing the measurement, statistical exploration and understanding of transitions to adulthood at the within-country and between country level, as well as their linkages:

1. By combining the data from the GGS and the ESS, this paper offers analysis on a new database combining information from many countries with fairly large sample sizes. In particular the often relatively ignored countries

of the Soviet Bloc feature extensively in the newly available data.

2. We extend the definition and measurement of "convergence" in two important ways. Previous work on convergence mainly looked at the cross-country dispersion of the median age of a particular transition, we try to instead look at cross-country differences in the entire age distribution of transitions, allowing to capture cross-country differences more precisely. We also apply the way convergence is empirically tested in economic growth theory to age transitions, allowing us to test more formally for periods of convergence or divergence respectively.

3. While most work on changing transitions to adulthood and convergence has either focused on how transitions within one country have changed or on how cross-national differences developed it is well worth regarding the two together. Can we observe within country divergence or convergence towards a common path of transition towards adulthood and how are the changes happening within countries linked to those happening across countries? This is in many ways a natural extension of looking at the entire distribution of transitions within one country to measure cross-country divergence, but it sheds important new light on how to think about the question of whether a new ideal-path of transiting towards adulthood has indeed been emerging.

4. We propose looking at links between transition ages. Second Demographic Transition proponents, generally theorize a process where a trend towards individualization and the spread of new norms affects the timing of several important transitions to adulthood simultaneously. This means that there should exist a clear link between the development of the timing of different transitions, i.e. changes towards marrying later, having children later and leaving the parental home earlier should all be linked in some way. We develop a tentative approach to test for such a links on a cross-country basis.

The last two additions are about better understanding how becoming an adult is changing by looking more specifically at two important analytical dimensions that are often theorized about in this context, namely gender and institutional regime.

5. In general, changing demographic transitions are analyzed either for men or for women separately. Looking at both of them together is more rarely done, but allows us to link the demographic changes that are happening to the emergence or disappearance of gender differences in transition timing, as Toulemon (Toulemon, 2010) has done. We do thus not only model men and women separately, but also specifically look how gender differences fit into the picture that emerges on changing transition ages

6. Much of the thinking about demographic transitions is at times implicitly, at times explicitly, embedded into thinking about different policy regimes. The Second Demographic Transition is often described as happening first in Scandinavian countries and diffusing from there into other European countries with different policy regimes. Billari and Liefbroer (Billari and Liefbroer, 2010) also grouped countries by similar institutional groups as those that we use when analyzing the changing of transitions to adulthood. In addition to looking at how average transition timing in different regimes change over time, we also aim to provide an analysis of the extent to which grouping countries by such regimes is a meaningful and statistically discriminant categorization and whether, the explanatory power of this categorization for the demographic trends we observe changes over time.

As can be seen from the variety of additions we propose, the aim of this paper is to provide an integrated summary of a broad variety of different aspects researchers have looked at when analyzing youth to adult transitions. We do so by looking at a newly integrated data set composed of the GGS and ESS. Proposing a broad perspective, that looks at a variety of measures is meant to lead to a coherent story of how to think about the demographic change affecting youth to adult transitions. In order to structure our thinking about the different subfields we explore we set out by defining empirically testable hypotheses for each of them. The hypothesis are formulated to express what one would expect to see if the trends that have characterized the second demographic transition were indeed leading to an ideal pathway that individuals and countries are converging too.

Trends

In general, regarding the timing of lifecourse transitions, the second demographic transition stresses an increasing postponement of events related to household and family formation; such as starting employment, getting married and having children. The fact that this postponement is interpreted in the context of a greater affirmation and expression of individual freedom means that it does generally not apply in the same way to the leaving of the parental home. Instead this transition is generally expected to stay stable or happen earlier. It is thus not a general delay of all transitions that is to be expected, but a change that increases, the period of individual autonomy without family ties, such as parents or children, which share the household.

HYP_{trend1}: Marital age and childbearing should increasingly happen later in life as time passes.

HYP_{trend2}: The timing of leaving the parental home should stay stable over time or move to being earlier in life.

Convergence

Second Demographic Transition theories stress that new, more individualistic norms appear among some individuals and in some places first, for example in Scandinavian countries and then gradually diffuse to other individuals and regions. We should thus have an initial divergence as the new norms appear and get adopted by some, followed by a convergence as they spread and get adopted by more individuals. This should happen both within countries, as some individuals initially adopt to the new norms and are then followed by more and more of society and at a cross-country level, as some countries are at the forefront of the demographic transition and others follow. In this scenario countries which first show a high internal divergence should be the ones driving the cross country divergence at first, because here the new norms and behaviours appear. Whereas when the late adopting countries of the new norms will have their internal divergence it will mean that a cross-country convergence is starting, as those countries are internally diverging as the process of them becoming more similar to countries that

have already adopted the new norms is starting.

HYP$_{convergence1}$: Within countries initial divergence of individual transition ages should be followed by convergence.

HYP$_{convergence2}$: Across countries initial divergence of the country transition distributions should be followed by convergence of those distributions.

HYP$_{convergence3}$: Initially within country divergence should be a driver of cross-country divergence. In later stages within country divergence, should become a driver of cross-country convergence.

Relationship between Transitions

Since the change of different youth to adult transitions that is happening is regarded as being driven by a common factor, which is norm change, one should expect that the changes in the age of lifecourse events should happen in a relatively correlated fashion as new norms affect all of them. Changes in one behaviour should thus be correlated to changes in other behaviours. Our predictions thus follow more or less directly from the predictions on trends, given the assumption that different transition ages are affected simultaneously by a change in underlying norms. We can thus conclude that the absolute values we observe for cross-country differences in transition ages should be correlated. We can also conclude that change in age, that we observe in one transition over time should be linked to the change in age of other transitions.

HYP$_{relationships}$: Age of marriage and childbirth should be positively related to one another and negatively related (or unrelated) to the age of leaving the parental home. The demographic transition, setting in should strengthen these links

Gender Differences

In general the norm changes underlying the second demographic transition are seen as being linked to greater individualization and related to that, also to the eroding traditional gender roles and their manifestation in the lifecourse. Insofar one would potentially expect gender differences in transition patterns to become less pronounced. On the other hand, certain transitions, in particular the age at which one has children can for biological reasons be delayed further back by men than by women, which might make the expected change in extreme cases less clear, nevertheless overall one would probably expect a reduction in male female differences, in particular given that having a child is not a transition that can be made on one's own

HYP$_{gender}$ Gender differences should be reduced in countries adopting to the newly emerging demographic

pattern

Regimes

Often theories about how different regimes, and their attached norms, institutions and laws affect transitions are presented as opposing to second demographic transition theories, in that they should predict consistent cross-country differences. On the other hand the ideas about how the newly emerging demographic patterns are expected to spread across countries, contains a clear regime component. In general new norms are expected to first emerge in Scandinavian or universalistic regimes and to spread to continental European (conservative) and Anglosaxon (liberal) regimes first and then to Mediterranean (sub-protective) and Eastern European (post-socialist) regimes. Related to our hypotheses on trends. We should thus expect regime-groups to initially explain more of the cross-national differences in demographic patterns as some regimes initially diverge away from others. Then as other regimes catch up we expect the explanatory power of the regime a country belongs to, for the transition pattern we observe in it to decrease again.

$HYP_{regimes}$ We expect the explanatory power of regime groups for demographic patterns we observe in different countries to initially increase and then decrease again.

2 Data and Method

2.1 Data

We combine retrospective biographical information from both the first wave of the Gender and Generations Survey (GGS), which was collected between 2004 and 2005 as well as from the third wave of the European Social Survey (ESS), which was collected in 2006. The Gender and Generations Survey, collected a first wave of data for 18 countries, from which we could extract all the relevant information needed to model the transitions we are interested in from 12 countries, which are Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Germany (DE), Estonia (EE), France (FR) , Georgia (GE) , Hungary (HU), Lithuania (LT), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Romania (RO) and Russia (RU). The GGS represents an effort to create a survey, with the stated aim of achieving a high-level of cross-national comparability. It is particularly developed to look at cross-generational links and dependencies and therefore includes several questions allowing to reconstruct individual lifecourses. Further the GGS is comprised of a fairly large number of observation, with an average of about 9,000 individuals sampled per country and it pays attention to sample comprehensively across individuals aged 18 to 80, allowing work to analyze generational and cohort effects. The GGP is unique in its large coverage of Central and East European countries, and is also the only comparative longitudinal panel study that covers the almost entire adult age range.

While the GGS is designed to include extensive biographical information, the European Social Survey included a special module on the timing and sequencing of life events in 2006. We use the ESS to be able to analyze a greater

number of countries. The ESS has been designed as the European Counterpart to the American General Social and also has a carefully supervised process to ensure questionnaire development and data treatment ensure maximum cross-national comparability. Each wave of the ESS consists of a core-questionnaire and a module and in the ESS-3 of 2006 the module was particularly designed to capture life-course transitions. The module includes information on norms regarding life-course decisions as well as data on the occurrence and timing of certain transitions in the respondents life. We use the latter information for which questions where asked in a completely similar way. The sample size for each country varies between a 1,000 and 3,000 observations. In particular since the sample size is larger and since the main focus of the questionnaire is to answer lifecourse questions, we take GGS data, in the cases where countries were available from both data sets. Nevertheless for many countries only ESS data was available. Those were, Austria (AT), Switzerland (CH), Cyprus (CY), Denmark (DK), Spain (ES), Finland (FI), Ireland (IE), Portugal (PT), Sweden (SE), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK), Ukraine (UA) and the United Kingdom (UK).

The fact that Italy is not included in the ESS and did not have well-recorded information on the transitions in the GGS is a drawback, as it is often seen as an exemplary country of the Southern European Regime, further since we already extend our sample beyond the European context with the inclusion of Australia (and to some extent Russia) the inclusion of the United States as a further illustrative country of the Anglosaxon regime would have been interesting.

2.2 Variables and Structuring of Data

We structure our data in a way that allows us to analyze how the age of key transitions to adulthood vary across time and countries. The specific transitions we analyze are

1. the age of moving out of the parental home [1]

2. the age of first marriage

3. the age at which the first child was born

Unfortunately it was not possible to include the first cohabitation, which is often viewed as a key element of the newly emerging demographic patterns, since it was inconsistently recorded across countries' and surveys. To analyze the change over time we look at five cohorts, each covering individuals born in one decade between the 1930s and the 1970s. It is important to bear in mind that whenever we speak about cohorts this specifically refers to birth-cohorts, not to the time at which a particular transition took place. When talking about the leaving of the home of the 1970S cohort we are thus effectively speaking about people who left the parental home between age In line with Esping-Andersen's analysis of welfare regimes Esping-Andersen (1990), the countries we look at were

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[1]defined as first time having lived separately from parents for at least three months

classified into the groups Nordic (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden), Central-Western European (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland), Anglo-Saxon (Australia, Ireland, UK) and Southern European (Cyprus, Spain, Portugal). In addition to this we include Former Soviet Countries (Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Slovak Republic, Russia, Ukraine) in our analysis, which as we will see follow a quite particular demographic development under the communist system and as they transitioned out of it. We further partition our sample and look separately at men and women in each birth cohort and each country or regime.

This structuring of the data, i.e. the split between cohorts as well as by country and regimes is kept for practically all analytical steps and methods we go on to use.

2.3 Methods

A number of different methods are employed to look at the different hypothesis. In particular the convergence hypotheses will be tested with new methods we propose.

Trends

We look at at the development of the median age in all three transitions across time to identify trends. We do this separately for men and women. First we look at the development of the median age for all countries, across the five cohorts. Then we average the medians of all the countries pertaining to a certain regime. This allows us to look at trends in different regimes. The fact that not necessarily all individuals in a country experience a transition makes the choice of a good summary statistic problematic. The mean would not be affected by individuals who do not experience a certain transition, further in later cohorts less individuals might have experienced a certain transition since they have lived less time to live than those of earlier cohorts. This would lead to serious selection bias. The most sensible way to address this sample selection problem, that some individuals have not married or had children, or left the parental home yet, is to use the median and to model the non-transitioned people as the most extreme version of delaying such a transition to a later time. Therefore we include individuals that have not yet lived through a transition in our sample population and treat them as if they will transition in the future, thus allowing them to pull up the recorded median value, which thus becomes comparable across cohorts. The only cases in which this statistic is problematic are a few country/transition cases in the last cohort (e.g. men leaving the parental home in Georgia) in which less than 50% of our cohort sample have actually lived through a transition. In general this is most likely to happen in countries, in which delaying of this particular transition is most extreme, leading to a slight downward bias for some of the "regime averages" in the last cohort.

Convergence

The question of convergence is mostly asked in the context of looking at whether cross-country differences tend to get smaller or bigger. However when theorizing about a new ideal-typical pathway to adulthood emerging, one should not only expect cross country patterns to become more similar but also that individuals within countries display more similar patterns in their pathway to adulthood. We thus decided to look at within- and across country convergence of patterns and the links that exist between them.

At the within country-level the measure we employ to look at how similar individuals within a given country and cohort are with respect to a particular transition is the range between the twenty-fifth and the fiftieth age percentile we observe. The twenty-fifth percentile has the advantage of being a lower bound that is already broadly representative of the distribution and robust to extreme individual outlier cases of very young transitions and the 50th percentile has the advantage that it is still observable for most transitions, countries and cohorts, given that many individuals do not necessarily go through certain transitions at all or have not yet done so at the time of the survey (if for example less than 50% of people marry we will observe no 50th percentile). We call this measure of how different the observed ages for individuals going through transition t (t could for example be "birth of first child") in country n and cohort c are Dispersion or $D5025$

$$D5025_{tnc} = p(50)_{tnc} - p(25)_{tnc} \tag{1}$$

To answer the question of whether there is convergence between countries or not, we use several approaches. Most importantly, we define a new distance measure for looking at how different transition patterns are across-countries for a given cohort. Whereas previous studies focused on the development of one statistic of the age distribution, such as the median age at childbirth and then looked at the cross-country variance of that statistic, we try to take (almost) the entire distribution into account.

More precisely we look at the cumulative distribution function(c.d.f.) $F(x_{tnc})$ for each one of our transitions. This tells us the amount of individuals at age x that have passed transition t in country n and cohort c . We then take the average c.d.f across all countries in a given cohort, which gives us the average c.d.f. $F(x_{tc})$. With

$$F(x_{tc}) = \frac{\sum_n F(x_{tnc})}{\#n} \tag{2}$$

Having the average function then allows us to calculate a simple distance measure. We look at how far the c.d.f of every given country is from the average c.d.f.. Practically we sum up the difference between the cumulative density function of each country and the average c.d.f. across all relevant ages x. This in turn gives us a distance

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measure $Dist_{tnc}$ for each country n in cohort c.

$$Dist_{tnc} = \sum_x F(x_{tnc}) - F(x_{tc}) \qquad (3)$$

This simply measures the space between the c.d.f of transition ages and the average c.d.f.; for a given country n, cohort c and transition c. We can also define the Absolute Distance, which is measured as the sum of the absolute distances between the country and the average cumulative distribution function. This assures that if the two functions cross at some point the positive and negative distances that we record at different points in time do not cancel each other out. While we thus have a more accurate measure of overall distance with this measure; we loose the information on whether a country is different from the average, because transitions mostly happened earlier, or mostly happened later there.

$$Absdist_{tnc} = \sum_{x \in X} F(x_{tnc}) - F(x_{tc}) \qquad (4)$$

Thus when analyzing the nature of individual country differences $Dist_{tnc}$ is a better measure since it tells us whether transitions happened later or earlier than on average in a given country, but when analyzing overall dispersion the average of $Absdist_{tnc}$ across countries, for a given transition and cohort is actually more accurate.

$$Disp_{tc} = \sum_n Absdist_{tnc}/\#n \qquad (5)$$

This gives us a measure of between country-dispersion in the age distributions of transitions. To get a sense of whether convergence is happening or not we can thus look at whether this distances between countries increase, decrease or remains unchanged across cohorts.

While looking at the evolution of distances between countries gives a good grasp of whether countries are indeed converging or diverging, we also lend methods from the literature on economic growth to test the convergence hypothesis somewhat more formally. To do so we look at the growth rates countries experience in median transition ages. Defining $x(t)_{c,n}$ as the median age that transition t happened for cohort c in country n, we can go on and define the growth rate of the transition age between two cohorts as follows.

$$\Delta x(t)_{c,c-1,n} = \frac{x(t)_{c,n}}{x(t)_{c-1,n}} \qquad (6)$$

The idea of growth regression testing for convergence is simply to regress the original pre-growth levels of the variables we are interested in on that variables growth rates. We thus get the following regression

$$\Delta x(t)_{c,c-1,n} = \alpha + \beta x(t)_{c-1,n} + \varepsilon \qquad (7)$$

We thus regress the growth rate in the median age of a transition between two cohorts on the observed value for
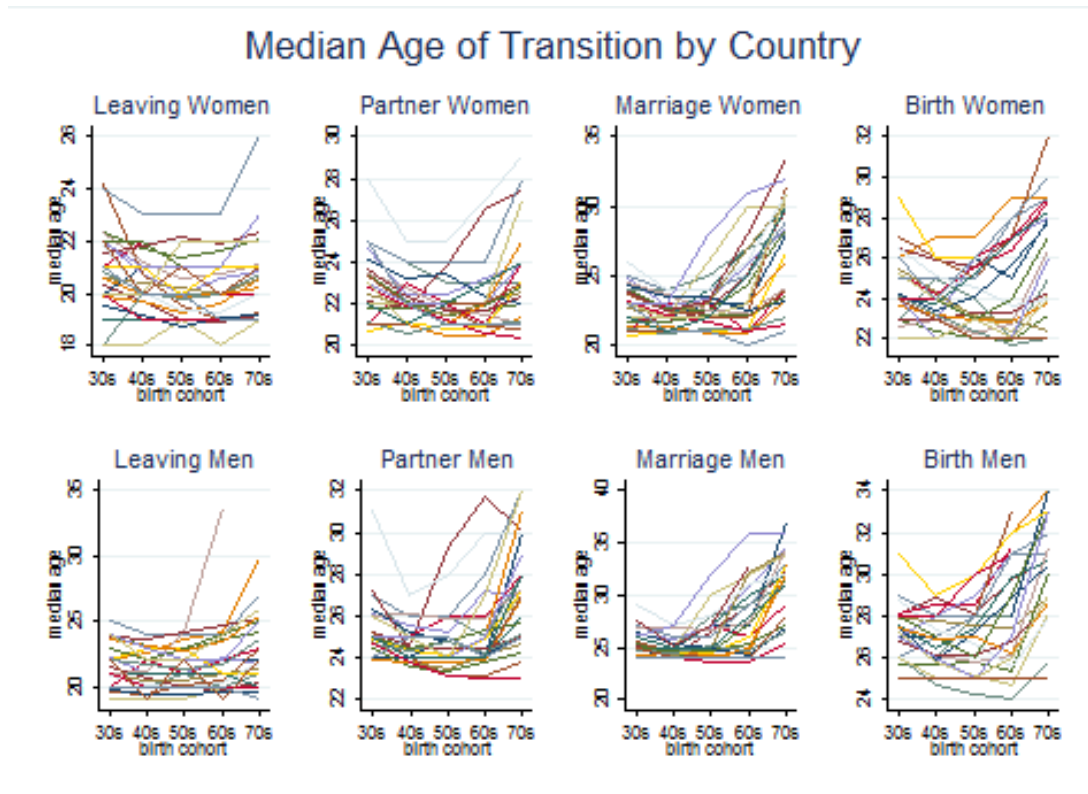
Figure 1: Median Age of Transitions, by Country, Cohort and Gender

that median in the first of those two cohorts. If countries with initially lower median ages have a faster growth in the transition age than those with initially higher median ages, we observe convergence and will obtain a negative coefficient β. Conversely if countries with initially higher median ages grow faster we observe divergence and will obtain a positive coefficient β.

The results from this analysis need not necessarily be similar to those from the distance measures, given that we only take the median, instead of age differences across the entire distribution of individuals going through a transition into account here. Further if the values for which we set up a convergence regression are fairly close and can overtake each other, which can be given in the case of transition ages, the regression might become somewhat less meaningful. To illustrate this imagine; two countries, one with an initially slightly lower transition age than the other. If the one with the lower transition age grows much stronger than the one with the slightly higher transition age, we would obtain a negative coefficient, while we would be practically observing something more akin to divergence. Nevertheless the information on whether countries with lower initial values grow faster is generally meaningful when exploring questions of convergence.

Relationships between transitions

Using the split of our data by gender and cohorts, we look at the three possible relationships between our transitions (leaving home - marriage, leaving home - childbirth, leaving home - marriage and childbirth - marriage).

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The relationships are explored by looking at how the different country median ages of these transitions pairs jointly evolve over time, by looking at the development of cross-country scatterplots over time.

Gender Differences

Similar to the way in which we look at trends in median ages we also proceed to look at the development of the difference between male and female median transition ages over time. This allows us to assess HYP_{gender}.

Regimes

The role of the five regimes (regions) we defined, namely, universalistic (Scandinavian), liberal (Anglosaxon), conservative (Central European), sub-protective (Southern European) and post-socialist (Eastern European) is taken into account in many of our analysis as we look at trends and relationships of the transitions regularly by grouping countries into these regime types. Regarding our hypothesis $HYP_{regimes}$ we are above all interested in the extent to which the different regime types we defined explain the cross-country differences we observe. We thus set up the following regression

$$Dist_n == \alpha + \beta D_{n=regime} + \varepsilon \tag{8}$$

Where $Dist_n$ is our measure of how different a countries transition distribution is from the average transition distribution, i.e. to what extent transitions happen earlier or later in a given country than they do on average. $D_{n=regime}$ is a set of dummies for the five different regime types, taking the value 1 if a country falls into a certain regime type. We run regression (8) Where $Dist_n$ is our measure of how different a countries' transition distribution is from the average transition distribution, i.e. to what extent transitions happen earlier or later in a given country than they do on average. $D_{n=regime}$ is a set of dummies for the five different regime types, taking the value 1 if a country falls into a certain regime type. We run regression (8) separately by gender and transition and cohort. Given that we are in a small sample setting and do not always have the same number of observations in each time period, since in a few cases less than half of a countries' population experienced a certain transition, we use the adjusted R^2 of these regression as our measure of the explanatory that regime types have for the cross country differences we observe.

3   Results

The interpretation of results follows the same thematic structure we established when formulating our hypotheses.
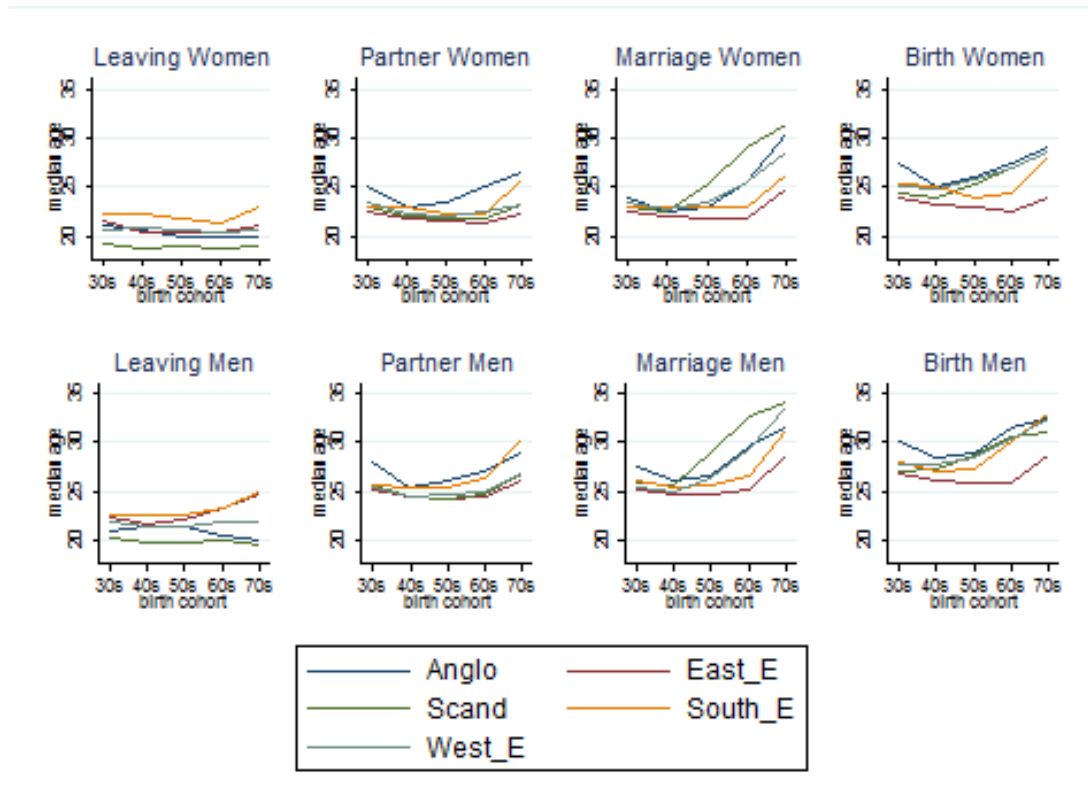
Figure 2: Median Age of Transitions by Regime, Cohort and Gender

3.1 Trends

We hypothesized that we should see a clear trend towards over time in both marriage and childbearing transitions, whereas we expected little change or earlier transitions for the leaving of the parental home. Table 1 shows how the median age of leaving the parental home evolved over time in 25 countries (data for Hungary was not well recorded for this variable). When averaging the medians for different countries we can see that for women born in the 1930s we observe an average value of leaving the home at 20.9 years, which then, in accordance with HYP_{trend2} dropped somewhat for the following cohorts, down to 20.2 for woman in the 1950s and 1960s but went up to an age of 20.9 again for the cohort born in the 1970s . For men, even though in certain regimes, such as the ones characterizing Scandinavia (Universalistic) and the Anglosaxon countries (Liberal), we do observe a downward trend in the age of leaving the home, across all countries the average is stable up to the 1950s and then begins to rise quite markedly from 21.6 for the 1950s cohort to 22.8 for the 1970s cohort. Three countries that particularly stand out are Georgia and Bulgaria, where the age for men leaving the home has shown an abnormally large rise after the end of the communist regime and Spain, which has consistently higher than average ages for men and women leaving the home. Figure 1 shows the development of median ages for men and women in all countries in the two graphs to the left. It has to be noted that the evolution of average median transition ages across countries might overrepresent trends in Former Communist regimes, given that these countries make up 10 out of 25 countries in our sample. The two graphs to the left in figure 2 show the development of the averages of country medians by regime. The corresponding values can also be seen in table 1. Overall, for women a picture of relative
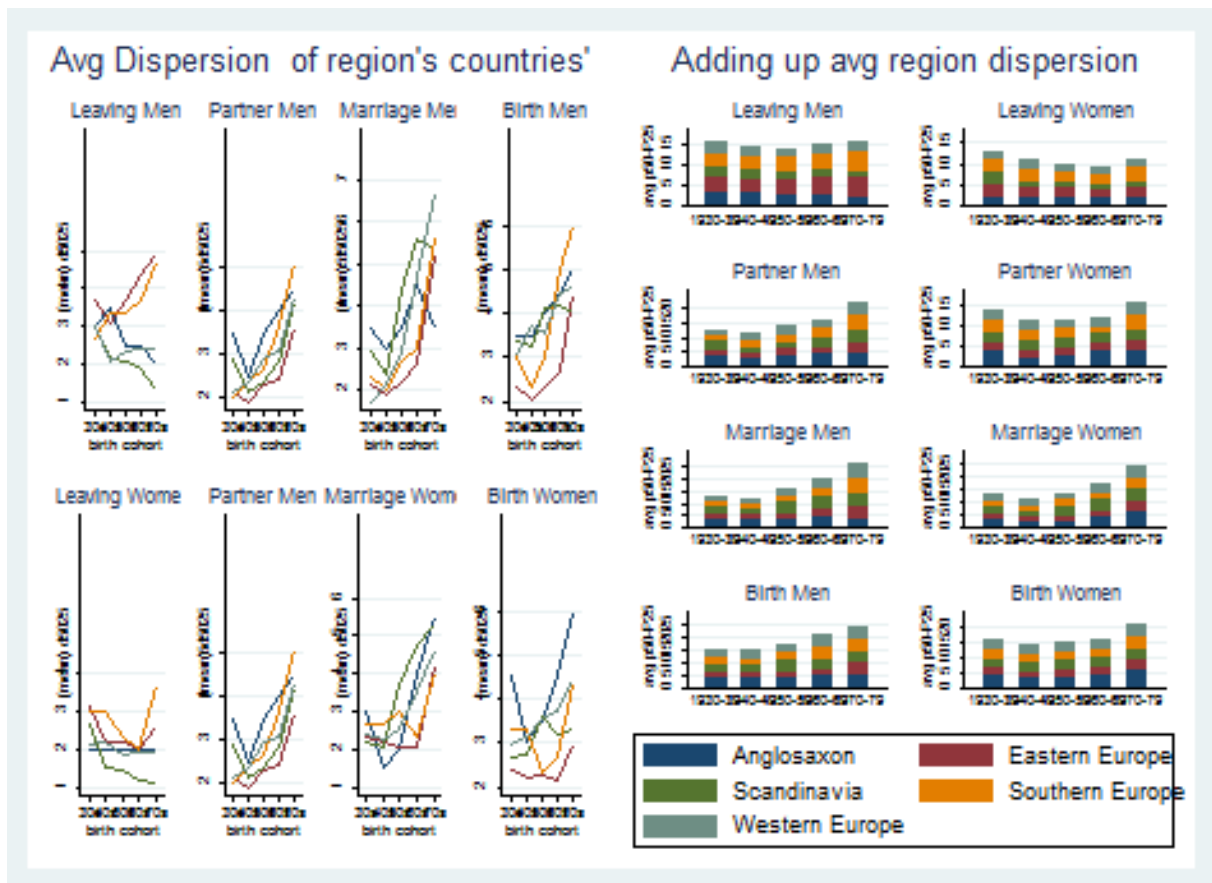
Figure 3: Average Dispersion by Regime

stability emerges, whereas for men, the age for leaving the home has gone down in Anglosaxon countries and up in Southern and Eastern European countries for the last two cohorts. Given that, if there is any trend at all, it is slightly tilted towards later leaving of the home on average HYP_{trend2} cannot be regarded as validated.

Similarly to the age of leaving home the country medians for age of first marriage and age of first child can be consulted in table 2 and table 3. For both transitions a similar picture emerges. Overall the average age of first childbirth and marriage across countries is on the rise for both sexes. This upward trend starts in the 1950s cohort for the Scandinavian, Central European and Anglosaxon regimes. For the 1970s cohort the trend then also clearly sets in for Southern and Eastern Europe. This is illustrated in the four graphs to the right in figure 2. When looking at the evolution of medians in different countries in the two graphs to the right in figure 1 two things stand out. First as expected all the change after the 1950s birth cohort occurs in countries moving towards later median ages. Second, rather than in a joint upward trend capturing all countries what we observe is that the difference between countries increases substantially as some countries go through very profound changes towards later transitions, while others remain close to constant. Overall HYP_{trend1} can be regarded as confirmed as there is a clear overall trend towards later marriage and childbearing in almost all countries and all regimes. Also the spread of this change across regimes, starting most strongly in Scandinavia, followed by the Anglosaxon and Central European
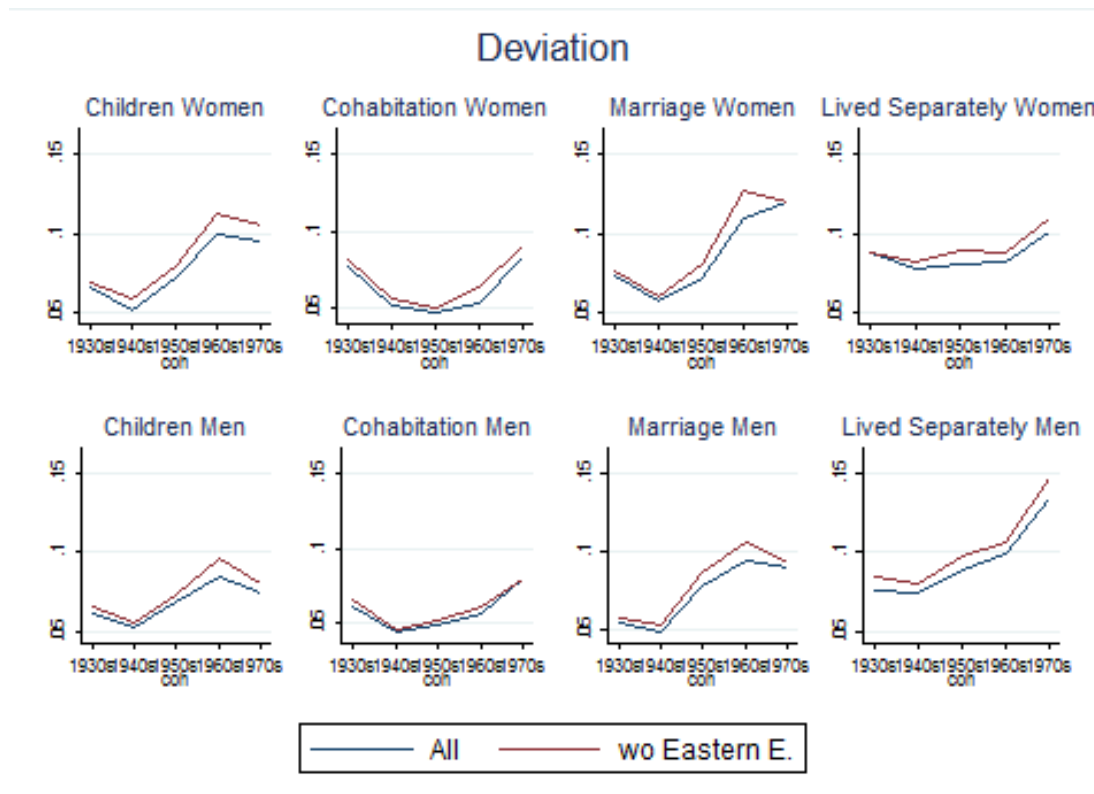
Figure 4: Average Absdist across Cohorts

regime and later the Southern and Central European one is consistent with the picture proponents of the second
demographic transition generally draw.

3.2 Convergence

Regarding convergence we had several hypotheses and dimensions of analysis. The first $HYP_{convergence1}$ con-
cerns the development of individuals within countries and states that as new norms and behaviours spread we
initially should see within country divergence of transition ages, but that this should be followed by within coun-
try convergence as these new norms and behaviours get more broadly adopted. Our measure of within country
dispersion $D5025$ was the difference between the 50th and 25th age percentile of a given cohort in a country for
experiencing a particular transition. Figure 3 graphically shows the development of the average of $D5025$ for all
countries forming part of a certain regime overtime. For example the age at which men leave the house has become
more dispersed in Eastern and Southern European countries and less so in Scandinavian, Anglosaxon and Central
European Countries. In the case of the leaving of the parental home no conclusive overall trend is observable
and regional particularities, in particular the increasingly late transition out of the parental house of parts of the
population in southern European countries, as well as in Eastern European countries after the end of communism
seem to be driving trends. Even though, interestingly the divergence in these regions is notably stronger for men
than for women. On the other hand in the case of marriage and childbirth a very clear trend emerges. With the
exception of an early reduction in within-country divergence in southern Europe, happening in the cohorts born

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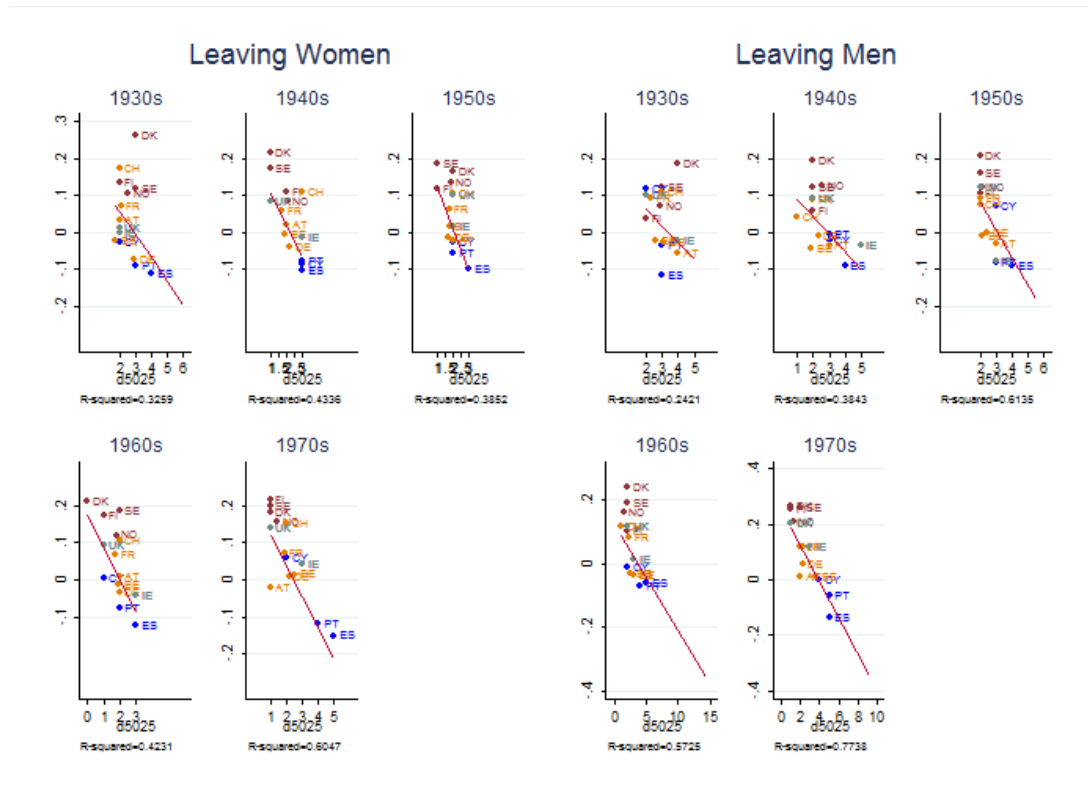
Figure 5: Leaving the parental home: Internal Dispersion (D5025) against distance from average country

in the 40s and 50S, there is a very clear overall trend of steadily increasing internal divergence, meaning that the differences we observe between different individual transition ages within one country seem to steadily increase. The right-hand graph of 3 illustrates the overall trend towards greater within country divergence, by summing up the average dispersion of our 5 different regimes for each cohort and thus showing clearly the trend towards greater within country differences.

$HYP_{convergence1}$ has to be strongly rejected. This continued trend towards more within country differences among individuals should be particularly troublesome to proponents of a new ideal-type transition to adulthood. In regions like Scandinavia, and the Anglosaxon countries, where the new demographic patterns started early and have had roughly thirty years to spread, few to no signs of within country convergence towards a common life-course pattern are observable. Instead a picture seems to emerge in which the greater freedom and possibilities in potential lifecourse designs that comes with the new norms seems to lead different individuals within one society to adopt increasingly different paths towards adulthood as fits their individual desires, circumstances and incentives. It seems much more plausible that the new demographic pattern is marked by a trend towards greater persisting differences in individual lifecourse patterns rather than by the emergence of a new ideal lifecourse pattern, when looking at these trends.

Our second hypothesis $HYP_{convergence2}$ is very similar to $HYP_{convergence1}$ but instead of hypothesizing about

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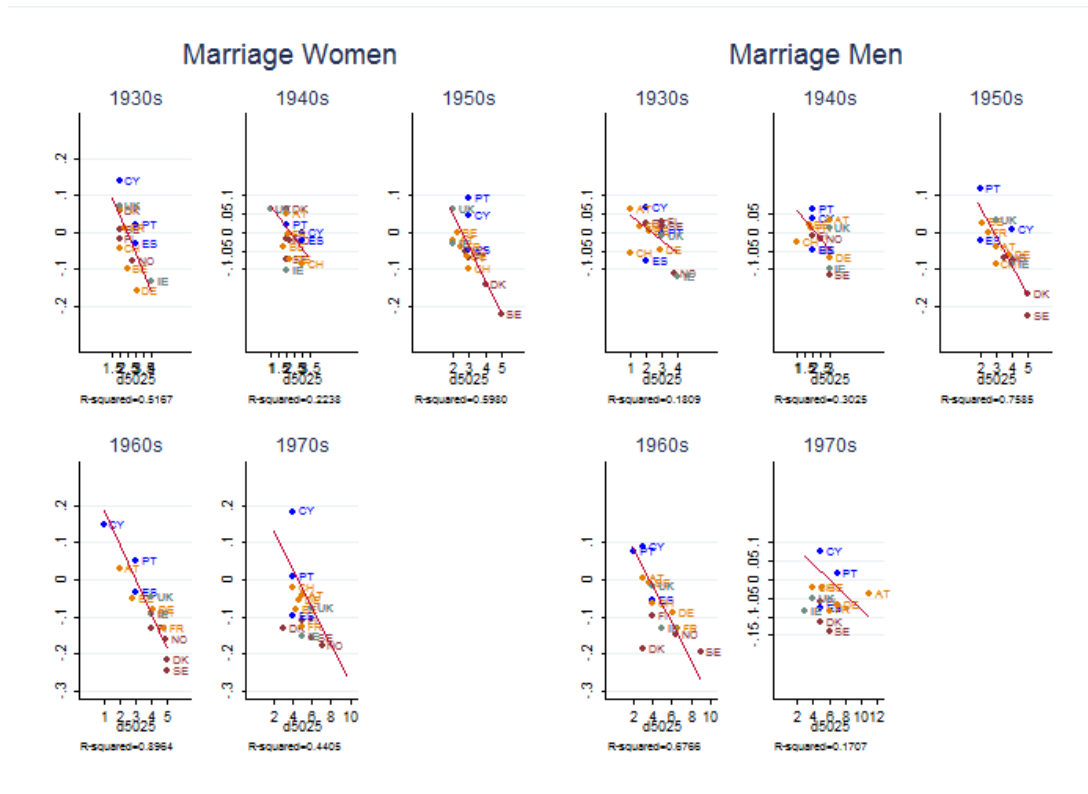
Figure 6: First Marriage: Internal Dispersion (D5025) against distance from average country

what should happen within countries, it states that on a cross-country level we would also expect to see initial divergence followed by convergence. Equation (4) gives us a measure of how different the ages we observe for a country transition distribution in a given cohort is from the average distribution across all countries for that cohort. The more dispersed or different the distributions of the different countries in our sample are the greater those differences will be on average. Table **??** shows the distances for each country from that average distribution. Taking the average of those individual country distributions then gives us a measure of the overall dispersion between countries. For example in the case of leaving the parental home for women we start with an average *Absdist* value of .087 for the cohort born in the 1930s which then drops to .077 for the 1940s to grow again up to a value of .100 for the 1970s cohort. This trend of a cross-country dispersion that initially drops a bit from the 1930s to the 1940s birth-cohort but then more or less steadily increases again is something we pretty consistently find for all three transitions for both genders. Graphically this can be seen in Figure 3.2which graphs out the average *Absdist* for the three lifecourse transitions we consider. Since Eastern European countries have such a particular demographic pattern due to the late breakup of the communist system, and since they make up such a large amount of the countries in our sample, we wanted to assure that the patterns of cross-country differences we establish also hold without them. To do so we reran our calculations without the inclusion of Eastern European countries. This means that we calculated the country distance from the average c.d.f. without Eastern Europe, which thus look differently than the distances reported in table **??**. What emerges is a picture of cross country convergence that is very similar with and without the inclusion of the Eastern European countries. Overall a clear picture of cross
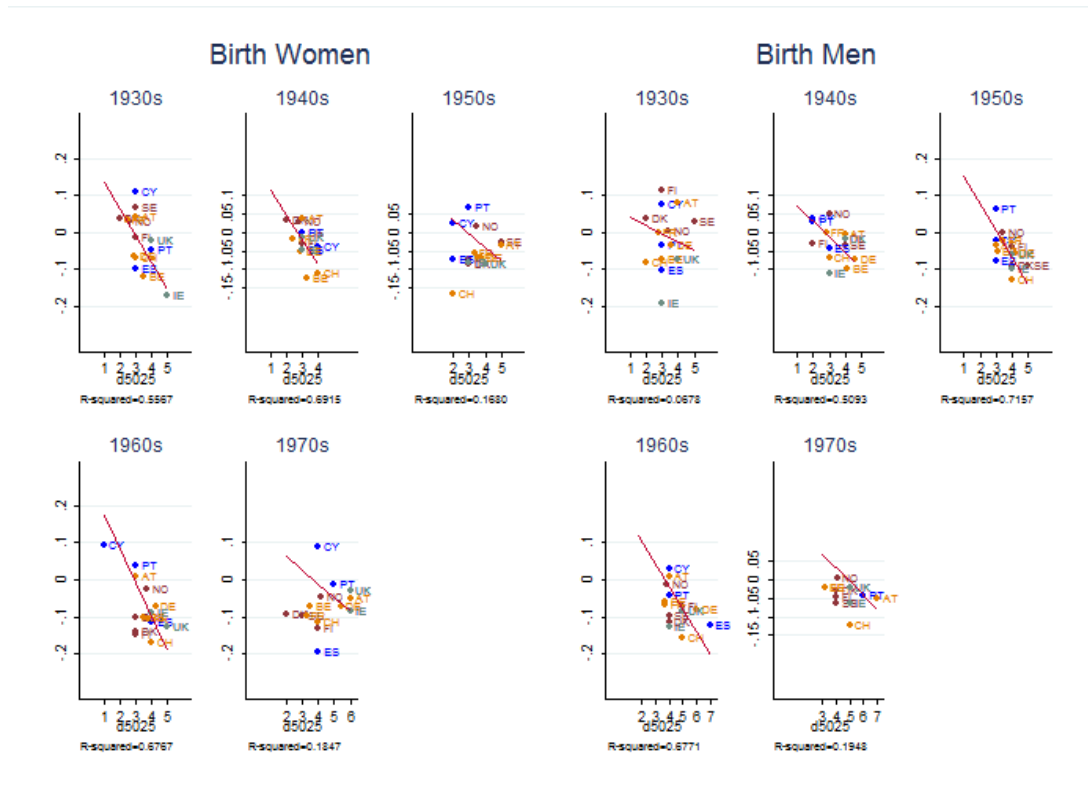
Figure 7: First Child: Internal Dispersion (D5025) against distance from average country

country divergence emerges. Even though the divergence slows down for the last cohort of the 1970s no sign of convergence emerges.

We go on to formally test convergence of median transition ages with regressions set up as specified by equation (7). The results can be seen in table 4. Again regressions were run separately by gender for each of the three transitions we consider. The first column (all) in the regression table takes all the growth rates in median transition ages between different cohorts into account. The following columns look at whether convergence happened in a particular time period between two cohorts, such as in between those born in the 1930s and those in the 1940s, or in between the 1960s and 1970s cohort. Interestingly and relatively consistently with the findings on the cross-country dispersion of transition distributions two periods stand out as having a clearly marked trend. First in between the 1930s and 1940s birth generation we do consistently observe significant convergence for all transitions in both genders as can be seen by the negative coefficients we obtain for the levels of the median ages in the regression. Secondly, the period between the 1950s and 1960s birth cohort, which for most transitions pretty much coincides with the spread of the second demographic transition in many countries, is marked by pretty consistent, and in many cases significant cross-country divergence, as can be seen by the positive coefficients we obtain for this period (with the exception of the age at which women leave the parental home). In the last period, i.e. the change between the 1960s and 1970s, some convergence, particularly for the age at which men have children can be observed, however no clear overall picture for divergence or convergence emerges in this period.

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Marriage and Leaving Home
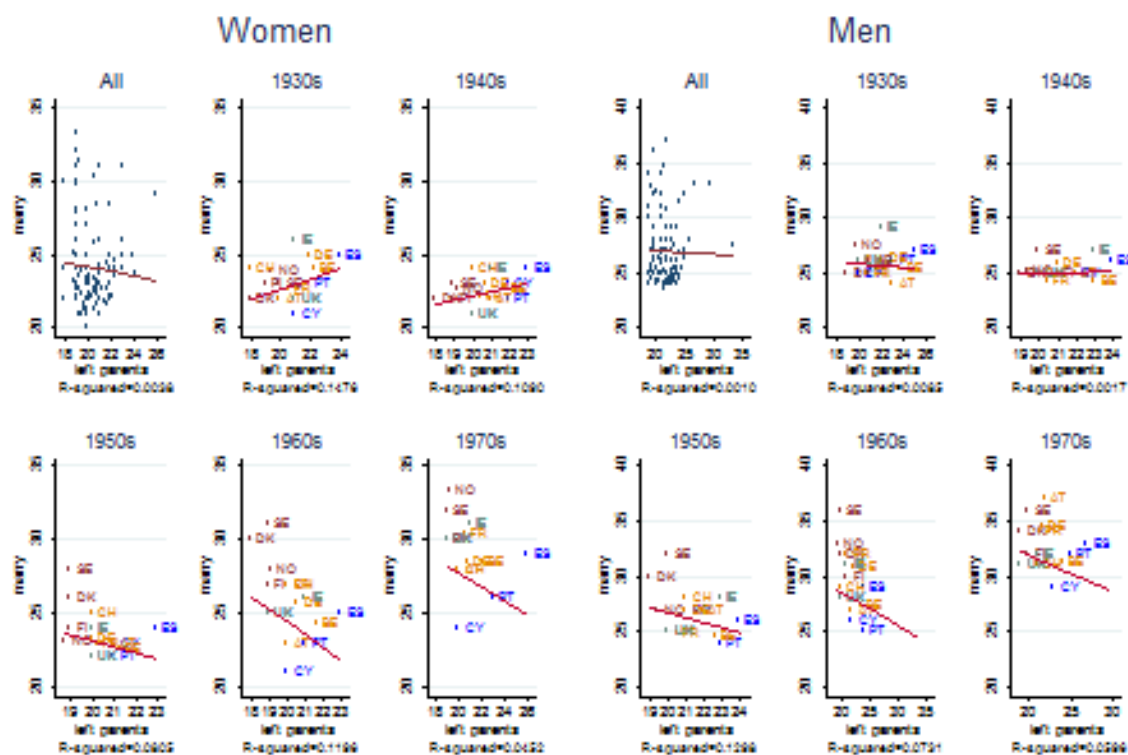
Overall both approaches give us a picture in which the onset of the second demographic transition, as expected goes along with strong cross-country divergences in the observed transitions, but where there is little to no evidence of this being followed by a period of convergence. Thus for the moment being $HYP_{convergence2}$ cannot be regarded as confirmed, even though the onset of a strong cross-country convergence pattern might still change this.

$HYP_{convergence3}$ that initially within country divergence should be linked to cross-country divergence and that later within country divergence should be linked to cross-country convergence was based on $HYP_{convergence1}$ and $HYP_{convergence2}$ being true, since we did not find this to be the case it is less clear what to expect on the relationship between within- and cross-country divergence. To assess in and between country convergence we plot our measure of within country dispersion $D5025$ against the measure $Dist_{tnc}$ we defined in (3). In contrast to $Absdist\ Dist_{tnc}$ has the advantage that if the transition ages in a country are younger than the transition ages of the average distribution of all countries, then it will display positive values. If on the other hand the transition ages within a country are older than average it will display positive values. We can see the relationship between the two distance measures for our three transitions in F=figure 5, figure 6 and figure 7. In the case of leaving the parental home, which can be seen in figure 5 we start in a situation were within and between country dispersion are in a not so clear relationship (R2 of .33 for women and .24 for men). But were increasingly, country groups emerge, with Spain
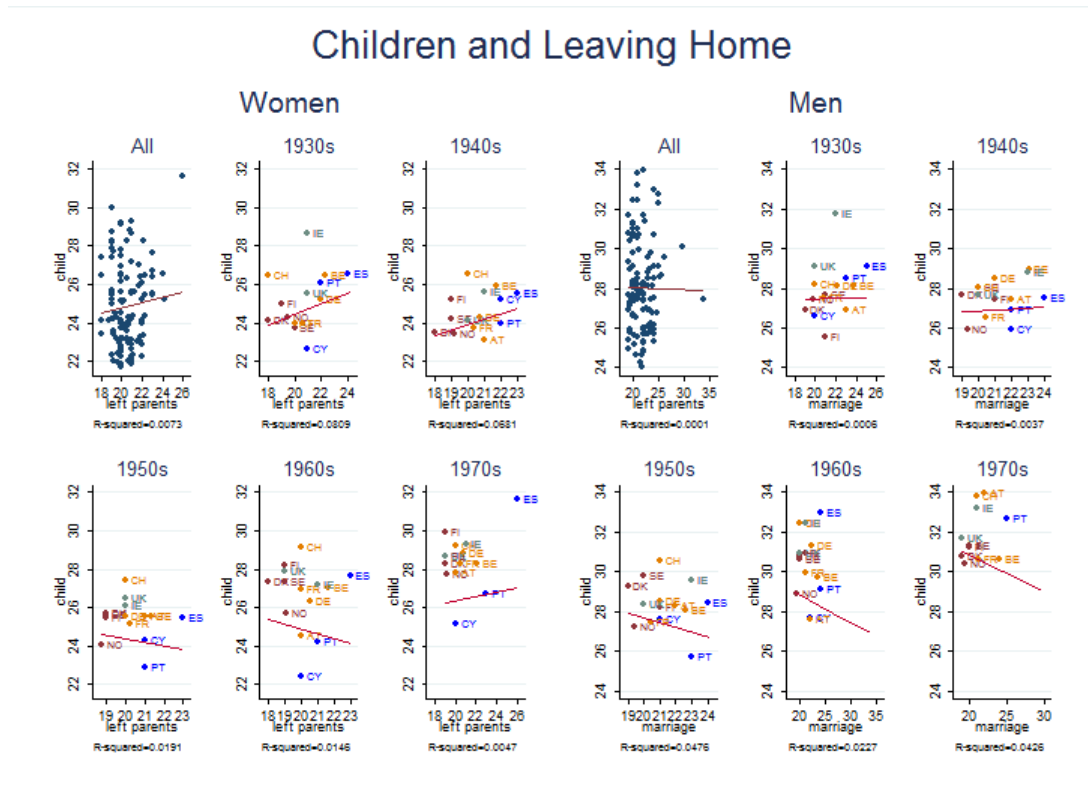
Figure 8: Relation between age at first childbirth and age of leaving parental home

and Portugal in particular moving towards high within country dispersion and a distribution marked by much later average transitions. In a way what this shows is that divergence within as well as between countries is really driven by a certain share, but not all of the population deciding to transit later within that country and thus driving up the within as well as the between country divergence, as in other countries this change of a share of the population moving to later transitions is less uniform. Similarly for marriage and the first child a similar relationship can be observed. The countries with very different or dispersed transition patterns in their population are also the ones who Display much later transitions on average in a cross-country context. It is interesting to note how in the 1960s, which according to our growth regressions is the time that was most strongly marked by cross-country divergence, the link between within and between dispersion appears strongest. The differences between countries that emerged, if a countries population would move in a uniform matter towards a new demographic pattern, this would not happen and if in the countries at the forefront of the demographic transition we would initially have part of the population move towards a new pattern of transitioning to adulthood and later have the rest of the population catch up, we should at first observe the negative slope relationship we know find between $D5025$, but this should then be replaced by a positive slope as the within population catchup happens. While in the 1970s a weakening of the relationship between internal dispersion and later than average transitions is observable, at least yet, no such reversal, which would come with the adoption of a new ideal pathway within countries is observable. The most likely explanation for the weakening of the relationship is that within dispersion has started to rise in all countries (including the late Eastern and Southern European ones) as can be seen in figure 3. We seem to thus be

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moving more and more towards a regime where a lot of different pathways exist within a country, but this high within country dispersion is happening around higher or lower average ages for different countries, making the relationship between within country dispersion and lateness of transitions in the country relative to average less clear. Overall none of our three convergence hypotheses entirely hold, leaving two possibilities, either that the convergences we expect to set in in later stages are still going to come or that we have to re-theorize how to think about the second demographic transition.

3.3 Relationships between transitions

We analyze the three possible relationships, by looking at their co-development over time. Figure 3.2 shows the country medians for leaving the parental home and those for marrying, figure 8 shows the relationship between leaving the home and childbirth and figure 9 shows the relationship between marriage and childbirth. The first graph (all) regroups all observations we have for countries in different cohorts, and the following graphs then show how the cross-country relationship developed over different cohorts. In the relationship between leaving the home and marriage, seen in fig. 3.2 we do indeed see the increasingly negative relationship we expected to set in as the second demographic transition emerges. In particular for men, the grouping by regime types becomes increasingly clear over time, with the Scandinavian countries moving towards a regime of early leaving of the home and late marriage and the Southern European ones to one where marriage continues to happen relatively early combined with an increasingly late leaving of the parental home. The relationship between the age of leaving the home and age of childbirth, seen in fig. 8 also has a tendency to move towards being slightly more negative over time, even though the pattern emerging is much less clear than the one for the relationship between leaving the home and marriage. The relationship between the age of childbirth and age of marriage is, as might be expected, positive and the most consistent one over time. It becomes most meaningful at the point were countries also diverged most clearly in the 1960s and ends up being more blurred for the final 1970s cohort. Overall the relationships between transitions vary quite strongly across time and mostly confirm our hypotheses.

3.4 Gender Differences

When looking at the development of gender differences over time we see that very different patterns emerge for the different institutional regimes we look at. In graph 10 we can see the cross-country average of the male median age minus the female median age, for each regime. Whereas in Scandinavia, gender differences were relatively stable across time with a slight drop in the last period. The Anglosaxon countries look similar, but display a much more pronounced reduction in gender differences for the last period we look at, this is above all true for the age of marriage. Western, Southern and Eastern Europe on the other hand all experience an upward trend in gender differences in age transitions, with men increasingly transitioning to childbirth, marriage and even the leaving of the parental home markedly later than women. Hyp_{gender}, i.e. that the new norms should go along with a
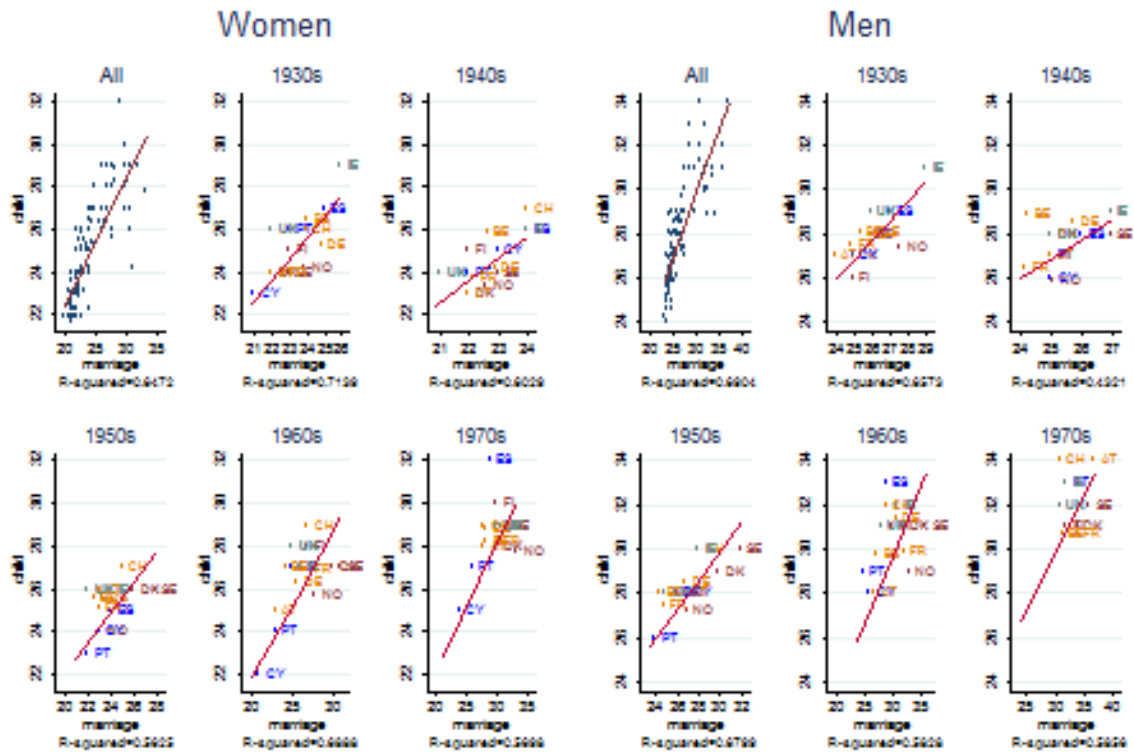
Figure 9: Relation between age at first childbirth and age of marriage
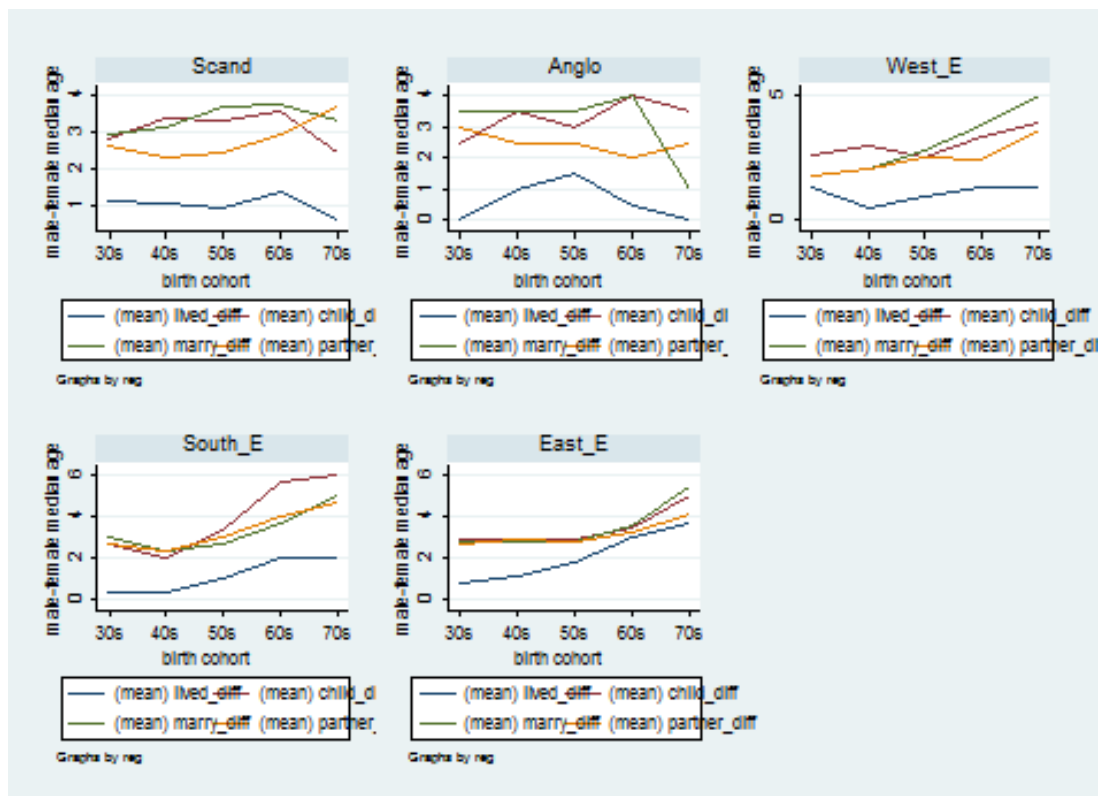
Figure 10: Evolution of average gender differences by regime over time
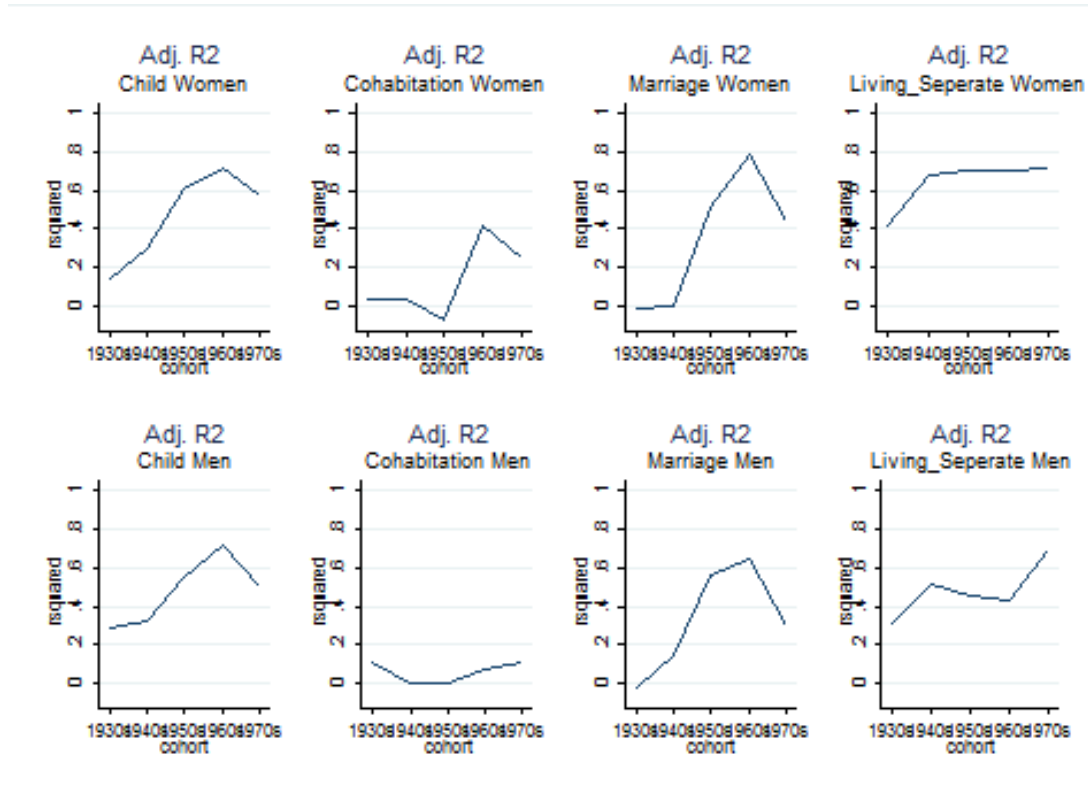
Figure 11: Amount of country differences explained by institutional regimes

reduction in gender differences has to be discarded. Instead we find that in different the increased possibilities of structuring the lifecourse seem to have consistently different gendered effects. This further calls into question the idea of a new ideal path to adulthood that is emerging and spreading. Instead a picture in which the weakening of traditional norms governing the lifehood, opens up the opportunity for many possible pathways and thus augments the influence of cross-country cultural and institutional differences, leading to increasingly different patterns seems much more plausible and in tune with what we observe.

3.5 Regimes

In order to test HYP_{Regime} we run the regression specified in (8) for each transition, gender and cohort. Since we are above all interested in the extent to which the regime types explain cross-country differences, we do not report the specific results of all regressions, but rather the development of the adjusted R^2 over time, which serves as our proxy for the explanatory power of regime types for the cross-country differences, as measured by $Dist$. The results of this can be seen in fig. 11. The trends we observe look very different for the age of leaving the parental home, which is not marked by a very clear trend and childbirth and marriage, which actually show the pattern we expect of increasing explanatory of regime type for the observed cross-country differences in transitions, as we move to later cohorts and a slight drop of this explanatory power for the last 1970s cohort. The divergence of countries was thus clearly marked by institutional groups diverging. It is interesting, that as cross-country differences persist strongly, the explanatory power of the regimes we defined seems to be decreasing. This might imply that, as differences

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persist, cross-country institutional differences at the individual level may come to matter more than those by the groups we defined. We do however have to observe the further development of trends to draw firm conclusions on this.

4 Conclusion

While median age trends for most transitions go along relatively well with the predictions made by the second demographic transition literature,surprisingly many of our hypotheses went unfulfilled. What is clear is that the theory describes well the start and spread of a new type of transition to adulthood starting in the late 1960s and 70s, meaning for our 1950s and 1960s bithcohorts. Where our hypotheses mostly run into trouble is when they expect that the trends we observe are driven by the emergence of a new ideal-type demographic pattern, that individuals and societies are moving towards and finally converging too. This idea fails at the individual level, where we observe a continually increasing difference between individual lifecourse patterns (as characterized by transition ages) within countries and it fails at the cross-country level, where we observe a divergence of cross-country patterns that does not seem to recede. In particular the failure of any convergence at the intracountry level for countries at the forefront of the Second Demographic Transition, such as the Scandinavian ones, should make us skeptical about the idea that a convergence towards a standardized, late and protracted ideal lifecourse is imminent, as these countries have experienced the spreading of new norms for a significant time now. The extremely different gendered effects we observe for different countries, further make us skeptical that a clearly characterizable new ideal-type of demographic pattern is emerging and spreading.

The weakening of the strength of the link between different transitions timing at a cross-country level, as well as that of the explanatory power of the regime groups, for the last cohort also seem to indicate that we move to a less easily characterizable world in which differences between countries persist, but are harder to link to clear ordered patterns or institutional groups.

Thinking about the second demographic transition as a weakening of norms governing the transition to adulthood, opening up greater possibilities for structuring and timing the individual lifecourse to which individuals display very different reactions, might be more helpful than thinking about it in terms of a clear coherent trend towards a new protracted pattern. It is above all an increase in the range or variance of individual lifecourse timing we observe, as some individuals within societies increasingly take advantage of the possibilities to have late and protracted transitions while others do not. Along with this spread in the variance of individual lifecourses, which is happening mainly in one direction, namely, with some individuals deciding to move towards increasingly later timing of marriage and childbirth we also see a moving up of the medians for those transitions.

At the cross-country level, the countries which initially experienced the divergence of individual patterns and

movement towards later median transitions for childbirth and marriage, were the ones initially driving the emergence of stronger cross-country differences. However interestingly as the within-country divergence increases in all countries, the cross-country divergence does not seem to go away. Just as different individuals within society seem to react to the increasing possibilities that come with the erosion of traditional norms governing demographic patterns in an increasingly varied way, countries different cultural and institutional norms seem to lead to a variety of different patterns emerging at the cross-national level, as the possibilities on how to structure the lifecourse increase.

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Table 1: Median Age: Leaving Parental Home

	Women					Men				
Country	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s
Scandinavia										
DK	18	18	19	18	19	19	19	19	20	19
FI	19	19	19	19	19	21	21	21	21	20
NO	19.5	19.2	18.8	19.1	19.2	19.8	19.3	19.4	19.5	19.5
SE	20	19	19	19	19	21	20	20	20	20
avg	**19.1**	**18.8**	**19**	**18.8**	**19.1**	**20.2**	**19.8**	**19.9**	**19.9**	**19.7**
Anglosaxon										
AU	20.3	19.7	19	18.9	20	21.6	20.6	20	19.8	20.3
IE	21	21	20	21	21	22	23	23	21	21
UK	21	20	20	19	19	20	20	20	20	19
avg	**20.8**	**20.2**	**19.7**	**19.6**	**20**	**21.2**	**21.2**	**21**	**20.3**	**20.1**
Central Eur										
AT	20	21	21	20	23	22	22	22	22	
BE	22.3	21.8	21.3	21.7	22.1	23.8	23.1	22.7	23.6	24.1
CH	18	20	20	20	20	20	20	21	20	21
DE	22	20.8	20	20.6	20.8	22.2	21	21	22.3	21.7
FR	20.5	20.4	20.3	20	20.5	20.8	20.5	20.5	21	21.3
avg	**20.6**	**20.8**	**20.5**	**20.5**	**21.3**	**21.8**	**21.3**	**21.4**	**21.8**	**22.0**
Mediterranean										
CY	21	22	21	20	20	20	22	21	22	23
ES	24	23	23	23	26	25	24	24	24	27
PT	22	22	21	21	23	23	22	23	24	25
avg	**22.3**	**22.3**	**21.7**	**21.3**	**23**	**22.7**	**22.7**	**22.7**	**23.3**	**25.0**
former Soviet										
BG	19.8	19.7	19.3	19.6	20.6	22.1	22.5	23.6	24.2	29.8
EE	24.1	20.8	19.5	19	19.3	19.5	19.3	20.2	20.5	22.9
GE	22.3	21.2	20.6	20.8	21	21	21.2	24.1	33.7	
HU										
LT	21.8	20.1	19.3	19.3	20.1	20.8	20.2	20	20.3	21.8
PL	21.6	21.8	22.2	21.9	22.3	23.8	23.6	24.2	24.7	25.3
RO	20.5	19.9	19.8	20	20.3	23.6	23.2	22.8	23.5	25.4
RU	20.8	20.1	19.8	20	20.8	22.1	21.8	21.4	21.7	23.6
SI	22	21	21	21	23	24	23	22	22	25
SK	20	20	22	22	22	24	22	22	24	26
UA	22	20	21	20	21	22	19	22	19	22
avg	**20.9**	**20.5**	**20.2**	**20.2**	**20.9**	**21.8**	**21.8**	**21.6**	**22.1**	**22.8**
avg	**21.5**	**20.5**	**20.5**	**20.4**	**21**	**22.3**	**22.6**	**22.2**	**23.3**	**24.6**

Table 2: Median Age: First Marriage

Country	Women					Men				
	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s
Scandinavia										
DK	22	22	26	30	30	25	25	30	32	34
FI	23	22	24	27	30	25	25	27	30	32
NO	23.9	22.6	23.2	27.9	33.3	27.6	25.1	27	32.9	
SE	23	23	28	31	32	26	27	32	36	36
avg	**23**	**22.4**	**25.3**	**28.9**	**31.3**	**25.9**	**25.5**	**29**	**31.7**	**34**
Anglosaxon										
AU	22.1	21.7	22.6	25.1	29.8	25.1	24.3	26.3	29	32.4
IE	26	24	24	26	31	29	27	28	31	32
UK	22	21	22	25	30	26	25	25	28	31
avg	**23.4**	**22.2**	**22.9**	**25.4**	**30.3**	**26.7**	**25.4**	**26.4**	**29.3**	**31.8**
Central Eur										
AT	22	22	23	23	28	24	25	27	27	37
BE	24.1	22.7	22.6	24.3	28.4	25.4	24.3	24.5	27.4	31.4
CH	24	24	25	27	28	26	25	28	29	31
DE	24.8	22.9	23.3	25.8	28.4	26.3	25.8	26.8	30.8	34.6
FR	22.7	22.2	23	27	30.3	24.9	24.2	24.8	32.1	34.1
avg	**23.5**	**22.8**	**23.4**	**25.4**	**28.6**	**25.3**	**24.9**	**26.2**	**29.3**	**33.6**
Mediterranean										
CY	21	23	23	21	24	25	25	27	26	29
ES	25	24	24	25	29	27	26	26	29	33
PT	23	22	22	23	26	26	25	24	25	32
avg	**23**	**23**	**23**	**23**	**26.3**	**26**	**25.3**	**25.7**	**26.7**	**32.3**
former Soviet										
BG	21.4	21.3	20.8	20.9	23.4	24.3	24.1	24.3	24.5	33
EE	23.8	22.5	22.3	22.2	31.4	25.7	24.5	24.1	25	
GE	24.5	23.8	22.5	22.3	24.3	26.8	26.9	26.8	27.4	34.3
HU	20.8	21.1	21	21.3	26.7	24.9	24.4	24.4	26	32.9
LT	24.3	23.5	23.5	22.6	23.3	26.4	25.4	25	24.3	26.9
PL	21.8	21.7	22.2	22.2	23.5	25	24.6	24.7	25.4	27
RO	21.3	20.8	21.3	21.3	22	24.7	24.5	25.0	24.8	26.3
RU	23.3	22.3	21.7	21	21.6	25	24.1	23.5	23.5	25.4
SI	23	22	22	23	31	26	25	25	28	
SK	21	21	22	22	24	25	24	24	24	28
UA	23	21	21	20	21	24	24	24	24	24
avg	**22.6**	**21.9**	**21.8**	**21.7**	**24.7**	**25.3**	**24.7**	**24.6**	**25.2**	**28.6**
overall avg	**23**	**22.3**	**22.9**	**24.1**	**27.3**	**25.6**	**25**	**25.9**	**27.6**	**31.2**

Table 3: Median age first child

Country	Women					Men				
	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s
Scandinavia										
DK	24	23	26	27	28	27	28	29	31	31
FI	25	25	25	28	30	26	27	28	31	31
NO	24.3	23.4	24.1	25.6	27.8	27.4	25.9	27.3	28.9	30.4
SE	24	24	26	27	29	28	28	30	31	32
avg	**24.3**	**23.9**	**25.3**	**26.9**	**28.7**	**27.1**	**27.3**	**28.6**	**30.5**	**31.1**
Anglosaxon										
AU										
IE	29	26	26	27	29	31	29	30	32	33
UK	26	24	26	28	29	29	28	28	31	32
avg	**27.5**	**25**	**26**	**27.5**	**29**	**30**	**28.5**	**29**	**31.5**	**32.5**
Central Eur										
AT	24	23	26	25	28	27	27	28	28	34
BE	26.5	25.9	25.6	27	28.3	28.1	28.9	28.1	29.8	30.6
CH	26	27	27	29	29	28	28	30	32	34
DE	25.3	24.3	25.5	26.3	28.9	28.1	28.5	28.5	31.3	
FR	24	23.8	25.2	26.9	28.3	27.5	26.5	27.4	29.9	30.6
avg	**25.2**	**25.2**	**25.9**	**26.8**	**28.5**	**27.2**	**27.8**	**28.4**	**30.2**	**32.3**
Mediterranean										
CY	23	25	24	22	25	27	26	28	28	
ES	27	26	25	27	32	29	28	28	33	
PT	26	24	23	24	27	28	27	26	29	33
avg	**25.3**	**25**	**24**	**24.3**	**26.3**	**28**	**27**	**27.3**	**30**	**33**
former Soviet										
BG	23	22.4	22	21.9	23.2	25.7	25.7	25.8	25.3	30.1
EE	25.3	23.9	23.1	22.3	24.1	27.2	25.8	25.2	24.7	28.1
GE	25.4	24.3	23.1	22.9	22.3	27.9	27.8	27.5	27.4	28.9
HU	22.6	22.9	22.3	22.6	26.3	26.7	26.1	25.7	26.2	31.3
LT	26.4	25.1	24.5	23.5	24	28.8	27.3	26.7	25.6	27.8
PL	23	23	23.3	23.3	24.3	26.8	26.1	26.8	28.6	
RO	23.6	23.2	22.9	22.8	23.8	27.4	26.9	27	26.3	28.6
RU	24.1	23.2	22.3	21.7	22	26	24.7	24.3	24	25.8
SI	24	22	23	22	26	27	26	25	27	33
SK	22	22	23	22	24	26	25	25	26	29
UA	24	23	22	22	22	25	25	25	25	25
avg	**23.9**	**23.2**	**21.9**	**22.5**	**23.8**	**26.8**	**25.1**	**25.8**	**26**	**28.8**
overall avg	**24.7**	**24.1**	**23.8**	**24.7**	**26.2**	**27.3**	**26.5**	**27.2**	**28.5**	**30.5**

Table 4: Convergence Regressions

Leaving (W)

	all		30s-40s		40s-50s		50s-60s		60s-70s	
	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value
median	−.011***	.001	−.021***	.000	−.011	.081	−.002	.667	.011	.082
Constant	.220***	.001	.425***	.001	.220	.092	.038	.712	−.185	.129
Adj. R^2	.101		.414		.088		−.035		.088	
No. of cases	100		25		25		25		25	

Leaving (M)

	all		30s-40s		40s-50s		50s-60s		60s-70s	
	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value
median	.001	.827	−.011*	.046	−.010	.113	.015	.235	.012	.163
Constant	−.005	.959	.215	.069	.232	.095	−.290	.275	−.213	.254
Adj. R^2	−.010		.125		.066		.020		.045	
No. of cases	99		25		25		25		24	

Marriage (W)

	all		30s-40s		40s-50s		50s-60s		60s-70s	
	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value
median	.005	.251	−.018***	.000	−.004	.759	.020*	.024	−.006	.412
Constant	−.076	.476	.384***	.000	.110	.686	−.418*	.041	.274	.115
Adj. R^2	.003		.426		−.038		.162		−.012	
No. of cases	104		26		26		26		26	

Marriage (M)

	all		30s-40s		40s-50s		50s-60s		60s-70s	
	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value
median	.004	.321	−.015**	.002	.018	.180	.008	.289	−.012	.086
Constant	−.057	.602	.359**	.003	−.425	.217	−.148	.472	.464*	.021
Adj. R^2	−.000		.314		.035		.007		.097	
No. of cases	100		26		26		26		22	

Child (W)

	all		30s-40s		40s-50s		50s-60s		60s-70s	
	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value
median	−.001	.841	−.016**	.002	−.002	.816	.016**	.005	−.003	.503
Constant	.035	.666	.380**	.003	.057	.770	−.378**	.007	.142	.202
Adj. R^2	−.010		.329		−.041		.266		−.023	
No. of cases	100		25		25		25		25	

Child (M)

	all		30s-40s		40s-50s		50s-60s		60s-70s	
	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value	Coef.	*p*-value
median	−.002	.489	−.015**	.004	.008	.186	.012	.067	−.014*	.011
Constant	.095	.331	.387**	.006	−.208	.211	−.288	.107	.482**	.003
Adj. R^2	−.005		.275		.034		.101		.245	
No. of cases	97		25		25		25		22	